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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE CELEBRATES THIRTY YEARS OF
INDEPENDENCE; DESPITE ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES STILL EXIST

Summary

[1](#)1. On the weekend of June 25, Mozambique commemorated 30 years of independence from Portugal. In events attended by numerous foreign dignitaries and diplomats, President Guebuza reiterated his campaign promise to fight absolute poverty, crime and corruption. Recognizing the challenges that Mozambique still faces, Guebuza called on all Mozambicans to unite in the battle. Opposition Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama and his party boycotted official events. End Summary.

Mozambique Celebrates Thirty Years of Independence

[1](#)2. In several events on the weekend of June 25, Mozambique celebrated 30 years of independence from Portuguese rule. Independence Day festivities in the capital city of Maputo included a morning wreath-laying ceremony at the Praca dos Herois, a monument where the remains of 26 liberation-era heroes, including Mozambique's founding president Samora Machel, are enshrined. Celebrations then moved to the Praca da Independencia where President Armando Guebuza welcomed the "flame of unity," a torch that was carried the length and breadth of the country under the slogan "Together in the Fight Against Poverty," repeating a torch run made at the time of independence. Dignitaries reported as attending the festivities included the presidents of Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, and Sao Tome and Principe, as well as South African elder statesman Nelson Mandela, who is now married to Machel's widow Graca, head of the NGO Foundation for Community Development (FDC).

[1](#)3. In his Independence Day address, President Guebuza reiterated the government's commitment to battle absolute poverty and urged all Mozambican citizens to fight obstacles to development, including red tape, corruption, crime, and diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and cholera. Guebuza admitted that, though Mozambique has experienced significant economic growth (about 8 percent a year between 1992-2004), the country still faces high poverty and unemployment rates, mainly among the rural populations. Guebuza said his five-year program seeks to address these issues by expanding basic social services such as education and health, increasing supply of water and power, and improving roads and other key infrastructure. On the international front, Guebuza spoke for the continued reinforcement of cooperation with bilateral and multilateral partners. (Note: Guebuza arrived back in Mozambique just days after completing two visits to the United States, where he participated in June 13 meetings with President Bush, MCC, USAID and, on a second visit, attended the CCA Business Summit in Baltimore. End note.)

Renamo Boycotts Official Events

[1](#)4. Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the opposition party Renamo, carried out his promise to boycott the celebrations claiming they were "a thinly-disguised ode" to the ruling Frelimo party. Mozambican Television (TVM) showed footage of Dhlakama and a few dozen Renamo members having their own party on the lawn outside the Renamo headquarters in Maputo. Several minor parties, some of which are part of the Renamo-Electoral Coalition, apparently ignored Dhlakama's call for a boycott and took part in the official events, including a reception at the Presidential Gardens.

Comment

[1](#)5. The ceremonies seemed less partisan than they could have been, and Guebuza's speech included praise, albeit backhanded, to Renamo for abiding by the terms of the Rome Peace Accords. End Comment.
Dudley